

# Clean Water Starts with Us

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WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT IN IOWA

DNR ♦ DSC ♦ NRCS

SUMMER 2008

## Get the watershed, project planning assistance you need

If you need help starting a watershed improvement project in your area, DNR, DSC and NRCS offer project planning assistance.

Receiving a Watershed Planning Assistance Grant is

watershed and where they originate.

Project coordinators can borrow tools for their own use, or have professionals such as regional coordinators, project officers and technical

Public relations efforts, such as town meetings and informative flyers, can help make your community aware of your watershed project. Professionals can also assist with design ideas such as creating a logo for your project and developing and maintaining your own Web page.

### Additional Funding

Watershed planners can help project coordinators develop a watershed management plan, which can be used to apply for project funding.

Steve Hopkins with the DNR's Watershed Improvement Program said, "Most watershed improvement projects begin by getting assistance from the DNR, DSC, and NRCS through their initial Watershed Planning Assistance Grant."

"Once the watershed has been carefully mapped out, the problem areas determined, and the solutions are identified, groups can apply for additional funding from various sources to begin watershed improvement."

Water quality project grants are awarded to projects by the DNR and DSC, offering not only funding, but professional planning and guidance assistance.

The Iowa Watershed Improvement Review Board (WIRB) offers water quality improvement funding to watershed projects as well.

Writer: Justine LePore, DNR



*Regional coordinator Bob Waters teaches project coordinator Kristine Binder to assess her watershed with the hand-held GIS tool.*

the first step to improving any watershed. This grant can help you identify problems in the watershed and create a plan to improve your river, lake or stream.

Experienced watershed professionals from DNR, DSC and NRCS are here to help you propose potential solutions for the watershed, create strategic plans for the project and put them to use.

### Technical Assistance

Because everything is connected in a watershed, it can be difficult to see specific areas of concern, but advanced technology available from DNR, DSC and NRCS can help identify problems in the

staff teach them how to use the devices and how to manage the data.

Watershed projects have stream assessment tools, watershed land cover tools, sediment delivery calculators, energy saving tools, hand-held GIS units, tablet computers and more available for technical assistance.

### Public Relations

Watershed Planning Assistance Grants also include public relations support. Professional assistance is available from the DNR to answer questions about public outreach and to make helpful suggestions to get your community involved.

clean water  
starts with you.

**Learn more about resources for coordinators on the web:**

<http://watershed.iowadnr.gov/coord.html>

## Five new conservationists to serve urban water quality projects

Five new urban conservationists will help Iowa cities move toward managing stormwater for better water quality. The urban conservationists will provide information and technical assistance on soil and water conservation methods in towns and cities to land development professionals, city officials, government agencies and private landowners.

While located in rapidly developing communities, the conservationists will provide expertise to communities across the state. Should any new funds become available, additional staff could be hired to focus on additional communities.

Wayne Petersen, based out of the Wallace Building in Des Moines, will coordinate statewide urban conservation efforts. Petersen, who served 11 years as State Urban Conservationist, will help develop a comprehensive statewide program that incorporates water quality protection into traditional storm water management strategies that addressed only flood control in the past.



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## More regional coordinators to start this summer

In the DNR's customer service research this winter, it was clear watershed projects appreciated their regional watershed coordinators, but also recognized the growing demands on their time.

In response, DNR and DSC are planning to hire two additional regional watershed coordinators this summer.

That means five regional coordinators will be available across the state to help those looking to develop watershed projects and to provide guidance to established projects.

With the addition of new staff, DNR and DSC will also redefine regional coordinators' territories and job descriptions.

The hiring plan has not yet been finalized, as it is subject to budget approval from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

As DNR and DSC move closer to hiring this summer, more details will follow.

## Flooding hits projects

Historic storms and floods have taken their toll across Iowa this spring and early summer. The saturated – and often flooded – ground is keeping both farmers and watershed projects out of the fields.

"Many conservation practice construction projects scheduled for spring will need to move to the fall," said Steve Hopkins with the DNR's watershed improvement program. "DNR and DSC will work with projects to get things done, including deadline extensions."

Contact Hopkins at (515) 281-6402 or Jim Gillespie, DSC, at (515) 281-7043 for more information on extensions.



*The spillway at Union Grove State Park, May 30. Amy Castillo photo.*



## DNR working on state water plan

The DNR is currently drafting the 2008 Water Plan for Iowa, focusing on water quality, water quantity and floodplain management.

The plan, one of Director Richard Leopold's top priorities, updates the state's last comprehensive water plan, created in 1978.

"The plan will be a working plan, one that anticipates future needs rather than simply reporting on the past," said Bill Ehm, the DNR's water policy coordinator.

The plan will focus on some of the greatest water issues in the state, including nonpoint source pollution, water conservation and allocation, and floodplain management in response to this summer's floods.

The plan will also look at water-oriented recreation; law and government; fish, wildlife and native vegetation; energy production; commercial navigation; and agriculture.

For each of these areas, the DNR will:

- Develop an issue paper that outlines the problems and needs for the topic
- Present the issue paper to a panel of experts from outside the DNR to examine the topics and assist in determining the necessary course of action
- Assemble the information to be included in the Water Plan
- Present the draft Water Plan to the public.

"The last plan in 1978 was a multi-year effort that used federal funding and had several staff devoted to the effort," Ehm said. "Unfortunately, DNR has none of that in 2008, but it is time to move forward."

The 1978 plan can be found on the DNR website at [www.iowadnr.gov/water/quantity.html](http://www.iowadnr.gov/water/quantity.html).

A steering committee of seven DNR staff members is guiding the 2008 Water Plan. They include Bill Ehm (chairman), Jack Riessen, Bernie

## DATES TO REMEMBER

### July 1:

Watershed Planning Assistance Grant applications due;  
[www.iowaagriculture.gov/soilConservation.asp](http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/soilConservation.asp)

### July 8-10:

SWIM workshop, Springbrook Conservation Education Center

### July:

Northeast Iowa project coordinator stream assessment workshop

### August 1:

WIRB grant applications due;  
[www.iowaagriculture.gov/IWIRB.asp](http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/IWIRB.asp)

### September 16-17:

Project coordinators statewide meeting

### October 1:

Sediment load reductions from watershed projects due to Adam Kiel

Hoyer, Marion Conover, Lyle Asell, Allen Bonini and Sharon Tahtinen.

## Get the Iowa Learning Farm rainfall simulator at your event

Looking for an interesting demonstration for your next watershed project open house or information fair?

The Iowa Learning Farm's conservation systems rainfall simulator is an educational tool used to illustrate the potential impacts of conservation and land management practices.

The rainfall simulator simultaneously distributes rain on five different surfaces via an oscillating nozzle. The runoff from these different scenarios

is collected in glass jars and the results are clearly visible.

For example, the rainfall simulator can highlight how keeping various amounts of residue on the land can reduce sediment loss, or the effectiveness of grass buffers to slow or prevent runoff, or how quickly rain runs off an urban parking lot.

The rainfall simulator crisscrossed the state last summer demonstrating at county fairs, field days, conferences and farmers' markets;

this summer will be just as busy. Keep an eye out for the rainfall simulator in your area. It could be at your county fair or an area field day.

If you are interested in having the simulator at your nonprofit event, phone (515) 294-5429 or complete the request

form available at

[www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf/).

The Iowa Learning Farm project, initiated in 2005, is a unique partnership of farmers, state and federal agencies, conservation groups, the research community and the general public. The Iowa Learning Farm is building a "culture of conservation," taking a grassroots approach to develop innovative ways in which all Iowans have an active role in keeping our natural resources healthy.

The project is a partnership between the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa State University Extension, Conservation Districts of Iowa and Iowa Farm Bureau Federation.

Courtesy Carol Brown, Iowa Learning Farm



ISU Extension photo

## Put a face to the name with your DSC contacts

In case you haven't had a chance to speak in person with your contacts from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship - Division of Soil Conservation (DSC), use this as a handy reference to learn more about your regional coordinator, field representative and Des Moines contacts.



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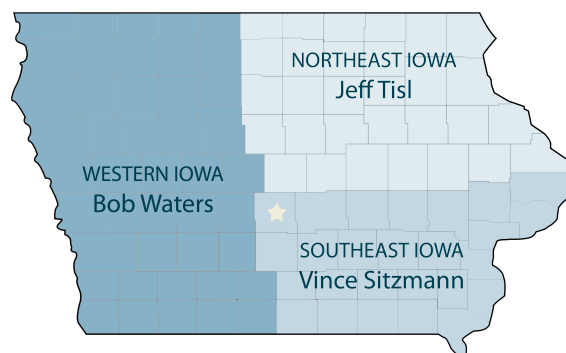
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**REGIONAL COORDINATORS** are your first stop for questions on watershed projects in Iowa. Working in their respective regions, they work in the field with watershed projects to identify water quality problems, answer planning questions and help you apply for grant assistance. Regional coordinators can also help you get your project on the ground and can provide technical assistance on the watershed approach.



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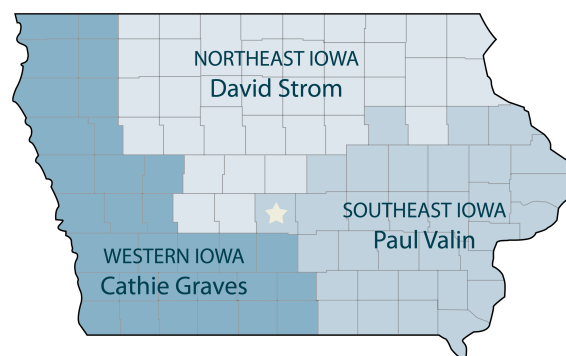
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**FIELD REPRESENTATIVES** work directly with Iowa's 100 soil and water conservation districts. Working in their respective regions, they supervise approximately 175 Division of Soil Conservation field office employees, interact with 500 SWCD commissioners and coordinate DSC programs with numerous conservation partners statewide.



**CENTRAL OFFICE DSC STAFF** coordinate watershed planning assistance and implementation grants statewide. They work closely with soil and water conservation districts entering into watershed agreements, processing grant payments and reporting accomplishments and outcomes.



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## Monitoring for stronger projects

To put it simply, water monitoring is essential to the success of watershed projects.

"People often question whether water quality really gets better over time," said Lynette Seigley, with the DNR's IOWATER program. "You can only assess that through water monitoring."

IOWATER, Iowa's volunteer water quality monitoring program, lets people impacted by impaired water bodies make a difference themselves.

"We want to engage the people that care the most. IOWATER depends on the concerns of individuals and groups," said Seigley.

Water monitoring serves as the first step of the watershed project process. Water samples identify pollutants harming the overall quality of the waterbody.

IOWATER provides necessary tools for sampling, as well as training through two-day workshops. Anyone can attend these workshops to learn the importance of water monitoring, as well as how to accurately test water and read data. Once volunteers complete the training process, they can monitor wherever and whenever they choose.

Seigley said volunteers train to do chemical monitoring, as well as aquatic insect monitoring. "We use both because it's possible for people to miss a chemical spill or sample the water too long after that has occurred, whereas insects living in the water are exposed to the pollutant

and still have the effects of it."

Water monitoring helps track the status of the water and measure its progress over time. It also acts as a warning to identify certain areas of the watershed in need of attention.



*Lisa Fascher samples Union Grove Lake.*

"The biggest and most important aspect though, is that volunteers are the ones out there taking samples and actually seeing the water change over time," said Rachel Glaza, DNR Watershed Improvement project officer. "It puts responsibility in the people's hands and gives them ownership of the water. They see and feel the success of their hard work, and that is very rewarding."

Visit [www.iowater.net](http://www.iowater.net) for more information on getting IOWATER involved with your watershed project. Questions can also be directed

## SCORING HEADLINES

Ever submit your news release to the local paper expecting a big story, and end up with just a couple of paragraphs buried in the middle of the paper?

Here's some hints from Leah Sweely, a watershed project coordinator in Clinton County, who recently scored a large feature article in a special section of *The DeWitt Observer*:

- Provide some education to reporters about watershed issues, explaining how they affect the greater community.
- Try tying in the watershed project to other timely news items. For example, an article about the jump in the price of anhydrous could be a stepping stone into a discussion of sediment basins as a way to offset fertilizer costs while improving the watershed.
- Make follow-up calls to newspapers, radio stations and individual reporters you know enjoy covering environmental, outdoors or agricultural issues.

to Brian Soenen at (515) 205-8587 or [Brian.Soenen@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Brian.Soenen@dnr.iowa.gov).

Writer: Elise Taylor, DNR

## Brush up on stream assessment in July

If you're looking to fine-tune your stream assessment skills, join other project coordinators from northeast Iowa for a stream training session this July.

The training at the Dubuque County Conservation Board's Swiss Valley Nature Center will focus on coldwater and warmwater stream assessments, and streambank stabilization.

"This training will enable project coordinators to conduct initial site assess-

ments more quickly, efficiently and with greater confidence," said Jeff Tisl, regional watershed coordinator for northeast Iowa.

The hands-on training near Peosta and Dubuque will take coordinators along Catfish Creek, Swiss Valley Park, and to nearby wetlands at Mines of Spain State Recreation Area. It will also feature presentations from DNR, University of Iowa Hygienic Lab and DNR Iowa Geological

Survey experts.

The workshop is in response to requests from project coordinators. An indoor meeting was held earlier this year.

For more information, contact Tisl at (563) 422-6201 or [Jeff.Tisl@iowaagriculture.gov](mailto:Jeff.Tisl@iowaagriculture.gov).

Due to space constraints, the training is open only to northeast Iowa project coordinators at this time. The date has yet to be set.



## 2008 WIRB grant recipients announced

These watershed projects are getting a lift from recent grant awards from the Watershed Improvement Review Board (WIRB):

### *Brushy Creek Watershed, Des Moines Water Works*

Objectives for this Carroll County project include enhancing nutrient and manure management to reduce agricultural inputs to the stream, and assessing the amount of human waste reaching the stream.

The project also aims to engage and inform local residents, leading to the creation of a watershed improvement association, and to monitor performance through a rigorous water and soil testing program.

### *Kettle Creek Watershed, City of Ottumwa*

This project will focus on the stream degradation occurring in the urban portion of Kettle Creek Watershed, working to reduce sediment by installing rock-riffle stream stabilization structures and streambank stabilization practices.

### *Miners Creek, City of Guttenberg*

This project brings together rural and urban partners to eliminate point source pollution contributions from the City of Guttenberg, decrease nonpoint source pollution, and increase in-stream and near-stream habitat in the Miners Creek watershed.



*Lake Macbride in Johnson County*

### *North Fork Maquoketa River Headwaters, Coffee Creek Watershed Improvement Association*

This project will address nutrients and sediment reaching the North Fork Maquoketa River headwaters. This project will use a performance reward program for targeted cooperators to improve environmental index scores.

### *Dry Run Creek Sub-Watershed, Floyd Soil and Water Conservation District*

This watershed project will provide technical and financial assistance to improve surface and groundwater quality. The project will focus on alternatives for agricultural drainage wells and incentives for nutrient and pest management.

### *Lake Macbride, Johnson Soil and Water Conservation District*

This project will install 1,400 feet of shoreline protection on Lake Macbride along Cottage Reserve Road.

### *Saylor Creek Sub-Watershed, City of Ankeny*

This is Phase 2 of the Saylor Creek Improvement Project and is focused on channel restoration of Saylor Creek and preventing channel erosion.

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WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT IN IOWA

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